

Media Literacy: One of the 21st Century Skills Your Students Need

by Frank Baker, media educator



Frank Baker

media like the water.

We know that many of our students learn from the media-saturated world in which they live. Marshall McLuhan compared it to the fish who lives inside a glass bowl but is oblivious to the fact that water surrounds it. So is the media like the water.

In the mid 1990's, several initiatives began to raise the level of awareness of media literacy. For the purposes of this article, media literacy is defined as those "skills (necessary) to empower persons to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages." (Alliance for a Media Literate America, 2001.)

Some schools believe that because they have video or TV production, that they are fulfilling the objective of media education. These courses, while well-meaning, do little to advance the cause of true media literacy.

In 1999, I co-authored (along with Rutgers University Professor Robert Kubey) the nation's first study of media literacy in all 50 states' teaching standards. What we found surprised us: media literacy exists in the standards of English, Social Studies and health. (At the same time, we lamented the fact that just because a state has included media literacy in its standards does not mean that it is being taught.)

Media literacy can be the key to helping students understand topics as diverse as body image, political advertising, product placement, tobacco marketing, propaganda, photojournalism, and more.

Two state initiatives designed to infuse media literacy into the curriculum are worthy of note here. Shortly after the Columbine, Colorado school shootings, the Discovery Channel parent company decided to underwrite the production of a comprehensive media literacy course for every teacher in the state of Maryland. The result was "Assignment: Media Literacy", a curriculum strongly connected to Maryland's English-language arts standards. (Link: <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/medialit/>)

The second state initiative of note is in the state of Texas. In our original review of state standards, we concluded that Texas' standards for media literacy were, by far, the most comprehensive. Since that time, much effort has been put into professional development for reading teachers in the state.

Another positive move for media literacy is its inclusion in current textbooks. As of this writing, Holt, Reinhart and Winston's Language Arts test "Elements of Language" and McDougal Littell's "Media Focus" (a video companion to Language Network) both include media literacy education in their texts.

In January 2003, this writer, in a partnership with the South Carolina State Department of Education, conducted several introductory workshops for English Language Arts supervisors. As a result of those workshops, a media literacy online document was designed to provide ELA teachers some background and some starting points in introducing "viewing" into their classrooms. (Link: <http://medialit.med.sc.edu/elahandouts.htm>)

(continued)

see "Media Literacy" on pg. 4

SC-SIC Board of Trustees Welcomes Six New Members

South Carolina School Improvement Council Board Chair Nell Stewart is pleased to announce that six new members have joined the SC-SIC Board of Trustees. Sylleste Davis (Moncks Corner), Tom Hudson (Beaufort), Gregory McCord (Columbia), Bob Staton (Lexington), Linda Weaver-Griggs (Rock Hill), and Barbara Weston (Eastover) were recently welcomed to the 21-member board, which is structured to be representative of the entire state, just as local SICs are representative of the school community.

"These new trustees bring immeasurable talent, expertise and commitment to public education to our board," said Ms. Stewart.



*Sylleste
Davis*

Sylleste Davis is an active school and community volunteer who currently serves on the Berkeley Intermediate School Improvement Council in Moncks Corner. Ms. Davis is employed by Santee Cooper as a wholesale markets manager and holds a masters degree in Computer and Information Technology from Webster University.

(continued)

*see "SC-SIC Welcomes New Board Members"
on pg. 3*

In This Issue...

- After-School Programs . . .pg. 3
- Value of School Nursing . .pg. 4
- Safe School Climate Act . .pg. 4
- One Student's Reaction . .pg. 5
- SIC Action Timeline . . .pg. 5
- Do You Know a Winner? . .pg. 6



Message from . . . the Executive Director

The data is in...

Schools across the state received the annual School Report Card on November 15 to distribute to the parents of students attending their school.

Each school is rated in two ways: the Absolute rating, based on student achievement scores (PACT), and the Improvement rating, based on how many students scored *higher than expected* based on the previous year's scores. It is possible for a school to receive an Absolute rating of Good and receive an Improvement rating of Unsatisfactory. It is also possible to receive an Unsatisfactory or Below Average Absolute rating and have an Excellent Improvement rating.

Turn to the inside to see test scores broken apart by subject, grade, gender, race, and socio-economic status (SES). Here you will find information school improvement councils can use to explore where to focus their efforts to improve student achievement. The SIC can learn which students in each subject and grade are having difficulty and begin putting plans in place to focus on those needs. Another page in the report contains descriptions about the school, students, and faculty. If, for example, teacher turnover is high, student SES is low, or the school is overcrowded for its capacity, you can learn about these indicators here and formulate a plan to take action aimed at improvement.

The narrative written by last year's SIC and principal is on the last page. The results from surveys completed by all teachers in the school, the students in grades 5, 8, and 11, and their parents are also found here. The analysis of these survey results was sent to your school by the SC Department of Education last spring. You can use this information to learn how many parents completed the survey. Then, discuss how your SIC can assist the school in increasing the number of respondents this year. Consider this information as a guide to help focus improvement efforts on the physical environment of the school and communication between parents, faculty and administration.

The data is in...use it to make deliberate and intentional improvements within your school. SC-SIC can help: call 800-868-2232, email us at sic@gwm.sc.edu, or go to the SC-SIC website, www.ed.sc.edu/sic. Click on "SIC Technology Toolkit" for the streaming video link to see programs about how the Report Card ratings are determined, what the indicators mean and how to write the narrative and end-of-year Report to the Parents.

Jean M. Norman

SC-SIC Board Member Ray Fleming Wins Aiken District 5 School Board Seat



Ray Fleming

Congratulations to SC-SIC's Ray Fleming, who defeated incumbent Tom Goforth to win a seat on the Aiken School District 5 school board. Ray took his message to the people, knocking on doors and asking for an opportunity to make the board's policies more transparent and accessible to the community. He has served on the SC-SIC Board of Trustees since 2005.

Way to go, Ray!



SC-SIC Board of Trustees

Nell Stewart, Chair - Greenville
Nancy Hanley, Vice Chair - Anderson
Patrick Cobb, Past Chair - Columbia
Wilbur Cave - Allendale
Sylleste Davis - Moncks Corner
Dr. Bruce Field - Columbia
Ray Fleming - North Augusta
Tom Hudson - Beaufort
Gregory McCord - Columbia
Jeff Nicholson - Rock Hill
Carlos Primus - Columbia
Thomas Richardson - Summerville
Cindy Smith - Lexington
Thessa Smith - Greenwood
Bob Staton - Lexington
Maria Gregory Taylor - Simpsonville
Linda Weaver-Griggs - Rock Hill
Barbara Weston - Eastover
Judy Wilson - Greenville

SC-SIC Staff

Jean M. Norman, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Cassie Barber, MA
Associate Director

Diane Jumper, M.Ed
Council Specialist

Claudia Wolverton
Project Specialist

COUNCIL NEWS . . . is an award winning publication of South Carolina School Improvement Council. Circulation 17,000. Your comments and articles are welcome. Contact Claudia Wolverton, Editor at:

USC College of Education
Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001
Columbia, SC 29208

Phone: 803-777-7658
Toll Free: 800-868-2232
E-mail: sic@gwm.sc.edu
Web address: www.ed.sc.edu/sic

The University of South Carolina system provides affirmative action and equal opportunity in education and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or veteran status.

"SC-SIC Welcomes New Board Members"

continued from pg. 1



Tom
Hudson

Tom Hudson serves as vice chairman of the Mossy Oaks Elementary School Management Council and is a member of the Partnership Board for Beaufort County First Steps. He is employed with the Beaufort County School District's Office of Communications, is a member of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and serves on the leadership team and as a counselor-on-call for the South Carolina chapter of NSPRA.



Gregory
McCord

Gregory McCord, Supervisor of Student Personnel Services for Lexington/Richland School District 5, is the former assistant principal at Eau Clair High School and holds an educational specialist degree from Lincoln Memorial University in Cleveland, TN. He has also served as an assistant principal and classroom teacher in Augusta, GA.



Bob
Staton

Bob Staton, former Chairman of the SC Education Oversight Committee, is a respected member of the business community who has served as President and CEO of United Way of South Carolina and also as Chairman of the Board for Carolina National Bank. Mr. Staton is the retired Chairman of Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Company.



Linda Weaver-
Griggs

Linda Weaver-Griggs is a seasoned school and community volunteer who has served on the Independence Elementary School Improvement Council in the Rock Hill school district and also been an active PTO member. Currently employed as the Associate Dean for Public Service at York Technical College, Ms. Weaver-Griggs is a former classroom teacher who has taught Kindergarten through middle school.

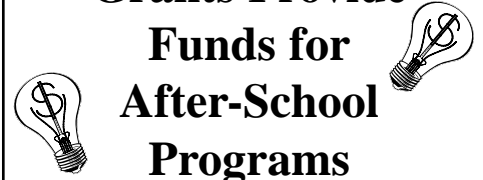


Barbara
Weston

Barbara Weston recently returned to the classroom after serving several years as curriculum coordinator for Orangeburg County Consolidated School District Three. Ms. Weston is a Milken Foundation Education Award Recipient and was named the Richland School District One Teacher of the Year in 1995.

The SC-SIC Board of Trustees provides guidance and support to the staff of the SC School Improvement Council, located in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. SC-SIC was created in partnership with the College of Education to provide training and services to school improvement councils statewide in support of their work to improve public education in their communities.

Grants Provide Funds for After-School Programs



Is your school thinking of starting an after-school program? The 21st Century Community Learning Center program provides grants to organizations that are interested in establishing or expanding quality community learning centers. Administered by the SC Department of Education and funded by No Child Left Behind legislation, the grants are designed to promote programs that:

- provide opportunities for academic enrichment, such as tutorial services (especially among schools designated as Unsatisfactory)
- offer services and activities such as drug and violence prevention, art, music and recreation programs, technology education, and character development programs
- offer families of students opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

For more information about 21st CCLC grants contact Sabrina Moore at smoore@sde.state.sc.us or 803-734-5804, or visit the SC Department of Education at their new web address, www.ed.sc.gov.



Five Characteristics of High-Performing After-School Programs

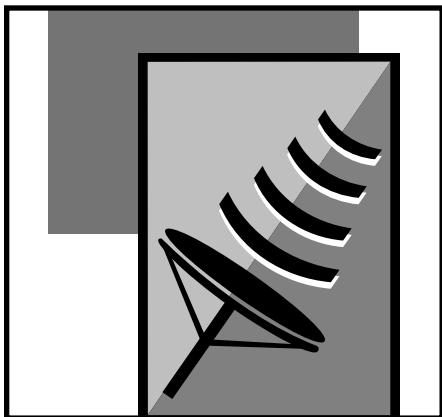
Two research groups have recently released findings reinforcing what other researchers in the afterschool field have found over the past ten years. Policy Studies Associates for The After-School Corporation (TASC) and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) have found that not only do afterschool programs contribute to increased student achievement, but those programs that lead to higher achievement do not necessarily focus on academics. In fact, the most successful programs combined arts, recreation and literacy activities and allowed the students free time as well.

According to Catherine Jordan, director of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, a part of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, "Successful afterschool programs do not replicate the school day." Indeed, Policy Studies Associates found that the most successful programs were safety zones where students could receive help with homework, develop new ideas and explore new interests. "Students also are able to develop long-term supportive relationships with adults and peers," she continued.

The TASC/SEDL study found the following five characteristics among the high-performing programs studied:

- Enrichment opportunities such as arts, crafts, homework help, sports, and recreation
- Opportunities for academic skill building
- A focus on relationship building with schools, families and other participants
- A skilled and experienced site manager, accompanied by a well-trained and supervised staff
- Full administrative, fiscal and professional development support from the sponsors of the program

Visit The TASC website at www.tascorp.org or the SEDL website at www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf to review the full report.



“Media Literacy”

continued from pg. 1

Finally, let me say a word about the role of the school library media specialist. As the gatekeeper of the media (newspapers, magazines, video, film, Internet), your media specialist is in a perfect position to assist teachers and students in media literacy education.

In a article I wrote for the September 2004 School Library Media Activities magazine, I suggested that media specialists:

- Survey teachers about their needs: do teachers need texts, magazines or videos that touch on media literacy topics?
- Consider subscribing to the nation's only media literacy journal: Telemedium. (Link: <http://www.nationaltelemediacouncil.org>.)
- Devote bulletin board space to media issues

In conclusion, media literacy has come a long way in the United States. With the help of administrations and school library media specialists, it can go even farther.

Frank Baker is a media education consultant, based in Columbia SC, who works with schools wanting to integrate twenty-first century media literacy into instruction. He can be reached at fbaker1346@aol.com. This article first appeared in Palmetto Administrator magazine, Fall 2005 issue.

*Find out more about
media literacy
by watching:*

Council Update -

***“Critical Thinking about
Media Literacy”***

**on streaming video at
www.ed.sc.edu/sic.**

The Value of School Nursing

by Mary Spanos-Beattie RN, BSN, CNA, CPHQ, CHSP, NCSN

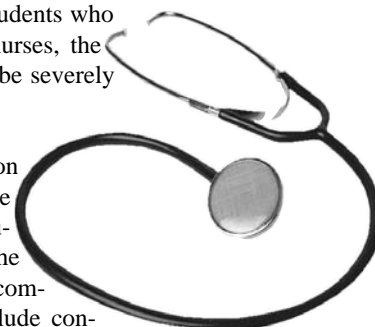
With the recent amendment to the SC Code of Laws to provide funding for a full-time nurse in all elementary schools, the role of the school nurse will continue to evolve and create positive health outcomes for our school children. All too often, the roles and responsibilities of the school nurse are misunderstood. It is important to clarify that school nurses are “real” nurses. They must be Registered Nurses meeting or exceeding the same clinical/professional skills, knowledge, licensure, education, and qualifications as nurses working in any non-school setting. The role of the school nurse is multi-faceted, with the overall goal of ensuring optimal health outcomes through prevention strategies and disease management.

Today school nurses manage chronic conditions and complex health issues on a daily basis. It is not uncommon for the school nurse to assume care of multiple students with conditions such as insulin dependent diabetes, organ transplant recipient therapies, cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, sickle cell disease, and acute asthma. The SC Annual School Nursing Survey shows that the six most reported health conditions among elementary schools for the past five years have been asthma, ADD/ADHD, severe allergies, epilepsy, migraine headaches, and psychiatric conditions. Insulin administration, breathing treatments, tube feedings, bladder catheterization, blood sugar monitoring, administering high-risk medications, and wound care are just a few of the health care needs requiring the skills of a licensed nurse during school hours. Many of these patients are elementary school students who have not developed self-care skills. Without school nurses, the ability of these children to attend school safely would be severely compromised.

The school nurse can be the gateway to early detection and recognition of health problems. Sometimes the school nurse is the only health care professional the student has access to. In these cases, the nurse assists the family in obtaining needed medical services through community and state resources. Other responsibilities include conducting health screenings for visual, dental, and hearing problems, assessing Body Mass Index to detect students at risk for health problems due to weight issues, and screenings for scoliosis and blood pressure problems. The school nurse works closely with local health departments to ensure that all children meet immunization requirements for communicable diseases and initiates health promotion strategies to promote life-long healthy habits.

School nursing is not a “band-aid fix”, but one of many challenges and opportunities to make a difference in the health and education of all children. It is our responsibility to define, clarify, and promote the role of the school nurse. With the change in state law, school nursing will be looked at and recognized in a whole new way: as a valued component of the school environment and a “Must Have” for all schools.

Mary Spanos-Beattie is a school nurse with Mary Bramlett Elementary School in Gaffney, SC.



Passage of Safe School Climate Act to Prohibit Bullying

On June 12, 2006, the SC General Assembly passed the Safe Schools Climate Act. The act requires each SC school district to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying, harassment or intimidation at school before January 1, 2007.

The Act also requires the The State Board of Education to develop a model policy to aid local school districts in developing their local policies for the prevention of harassment or bullying.

To read the State Board of Education model policy, visit <http://www.ed.sc.gov/>. Type “Safe School Climate Act” (include the quotes) in the search bar and hit return.



POINT OF VIEW

Opinion and Commentary

“But What About Us” - One Student’s Response

by Elhaam Borhanian

But what about us?” reads the first line on a copy of the Corridor of Shame booklet.

The Corridor of Shame is a documentary that focuses on South Carolina rural schools, many of them located along the I-95 “corridor.” They are not sufficiently funded and cannot provide an adequate education for their students, according to students who tell the story through photographs and captions.

These schools the Corridor of Shame documentary is based on have less funding, and support from local governments is declining because of closing plants and diminishing tax bases. The majority of these schools were built in the early 1900’s, and J.V. Martin Junior High School in District 2, built in 1896, is the oldest of all the schools. The youngest of the buildings were built in the 1950’s.

Teachers have lower salaries at these schools than they would have at other schools in wealthier districts with better conditions. Teachers leave every year because of poor conditions and the students learn from outdated, worn textbooks. There are poorly stocked libraries and ill-equipped science and foreign language labs. Academic performance ranks below average, and the math and language scores are also low. The high school graduation rate is 32 – 48 percent, which is below state average.

South Pointe High School had the opportunity to see the documentary on the Corridor of Shame. Nearly all students had the same reactions to the conditions.

“While watching the Corridor of Shame video, my first feeling was disgust. When I saw what those kids had to stay in every day, I just felt so bad. I think that it isn’t right that we have a beautiful school like South Pointe and they have those torn up places. They deserve help and we should be the ones to start doing it,” said sophomore Savannah Craig. “Corridor of Shame is a damn shame.



It’s sad that our state cannot provide for those schools,” says junior Danielle Pride.

So, what about the students? How do they feel about their school not being a suitable place for an adequate education? The students are the ones who helped put up this display. Students from every school featured in the Corridor of Shame documentary were given cameras and told to take pictures of the poor condition their schools were in. Pictures of damaged textbooks, unbearable restrooms, poorly equipped libraries and science labs, and ancient parts of the school that desperately need repairs were taken. The cutlines underneath the pictures are quotes by student

photographers, stating complaints of poor conditions.

“I wanted our students to be aware of the atrocities,” Superintendent Dr. Edgar Taylor of Laurens District 55 said. The Laurens District 55 school district featured all of its schools in the Corridor of Shame documentary.

Student responses to the documentary are sympathetic to what the students of these schools have to go through, but what can be done?

“I think that the school boards and the government need to pay more attention to what’s going on in the schools and they need to take an inventory to see what the schools need, what the students need, and what the staff needs,” said sophomore Katiana Bowles. “It makes me mad that no one has taken the time to help these schools,” said junior Sydney Ligon. How can students help these schools anyway? “I don’t even think the schools should even be there if they’re in that bad of shape. The kids should be transferred to other districts,” said a sophomore who wishes to remain anonymous.

To help the schools achieve more funding, contact the state legislators and ask them to help provide a more adequate education for students and to help acquire better conditions for these schools. Students can also help spread the word by contacting local newspapers and asking them to publish articles on the Corridor of Shame.

Elhaam Borhanian is a sophomore at South Pointe High School, Rock Hill School District 3

SIC Action Timeline

December / January

- Publicize School Report Card ratings and achievements
- Analyze Report Card information and implications for your school
 - Receive information on progress of improvement strategies
- Prepare a distribution plan for parent surveys distributed by the SC Department of Education
 - Send a representative to school board budget meetings
- Organize a committee to follow the progress of education legislation in the SC General Assembly

Do You Know a Winner?

SICs Win State Board Awards

The State Board of Education recognized two School Improvement Councils last month for their volunteer efforts in local schools. Bookman Road Elementary (Richland School District 2) and Wade Hampton High (Greenville County School District) both received **Gold Awards** for promoting student achievement, enhancing school-community relations, strengthening school resources, encouraging a positive climate, and promoting teacher effectiveness.

The recognition occurred October 11 during the State Board of Education meeting at the Rutledge Building in Columbia. State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum presented the awards.

"These extraordinary volunteers give unselfishly of their time to provide our students with meaningful learning opportunities," Tenenbaum said. "This year's honorees not only see the needs of students, but also see how they can personally help to meet those needs. Our schools are better places because of their service."

The Volunteer Awards are authorized by the Education Improvement Act of 1984 and are designed to honor the time, energy, talents and other resources contributed to South Carolina schools. They recognize significant contributions made by three categories of recipients: civic organizations, individuals and school improvement councils. Candidates are nominated by school districts across the state.



All-Health Team Winners

The Alternative Academy for Success in Chapin and the *Imagine That!* Improv Troupe in Spartanburg have been selected for the **All-Health Team**. Both groups used their creative talents to spread preventive health messages.

The "*Patrick the Pack Rat*" puppet program was selected as the September winner. Made up of students from the Alternative Academy for Success, the group performs a puppet show to help students in grades K-5 understand the dangers of tobacco use.

Last year the group spread their tobacco awareness message to all of Richland-Lexington School District Five's elementary schools.

The October winner, the "*Imagine That!*" improvisational theater troupe, was selected for their efforts to spread healthy lifestyle messages across the state. The Spartanburg-based troupe, made up middle and high school students, performs throughout SC., reaching youth and adults through dramatic presentations on topics such as HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, eating disorders, suicide, drugs, smoking and other health-related issues.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and WIS-TV 10 sponsor the All-Health Team. For being named to the All-Health Team, winners received \$500, various All-Health items, recognition on the All-Health website and a spot on WIS-TV 10. For information, visit www.scdhec.gov/allhealth; call Joann Moton Minder at (803) 545-4501, or e-mail minderjm@dhec.sc.gov.

